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CONTENTS

I. The Church Situation in East Germany, April-August, 1953

II. A Visit to China

III. Nanking's New Union Theological Seminary

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THE CHURCH SITUATION IN EAST GERMANY - APRIL TO AUGUST, 1953

During the past few months everyone who has read a newspaper has heard about East Germany. The sudden change of government policy toward the farmers, small businessmen, and the Church, on the 9th and 10th of June, and the mass demonstrations of the workers on the 16th and 17th of June and their consequences, are known everywhere. In this article we will look at the Evangelical Church and at Christians in the midst of these changes.

In April 1953 the Church was involved in a struggle with the State which bore all the signs of an attempt to break the influence of the Church in public life and confine its prophetic word to irrelevancy. The details of this struggle were set forth in the last issue of Background Information. By the end of May, 70 pastors, church workers, and active laymen were in prison for their part in Church work. Between 2,000 and 3,000 young people had been expelled from school for refusing to renounce their "membership" in the "illegal organization", the Junge Gemeinde. The Junge Gemeinde is in fact not an organization and has no membership apart from the youth of the Church itself, but it was the main object of communist attack because it is one of the most active movements in the Church's life. More than 30 students had been expelled from the university for refusing to renounce the Studentengemeinde (The Church's student congregation at the university). Four institutions of the Inner Mission (hospitals, asylums, old people's homes and other such philanthropic work) had been confiscated, and others had been hindered in their work. State subsidies had not been paid for 1953, and were DM 1,800,000 in arrears. Countless fines and warnings to pastors for not announcing meetings in church rooms (despite the explicit provisions of the Constitution of the German Democratic Republic which permits freedom of assembly), and interference with such meetings were occurring. And finally, a violent propaganda campaign was being carried on against the Junge Gemeinde, against certain of the arrested pastors, and against Bishop Müller, Bishop Dibelius, and others in the leadership of the Church. Outside the Church, farmers and small businessmen were being expropriated and imprisoned, and the process of violent socialization was continuing. The stream of refugees decreased somewhat in April due to stronger controls around Berlin but no other signs of a change in policy were to be seen.

Almost all of the leaders of the Church were at that time prepared for a struggle continuing into the unforeseeable future. Propst Grüber promised in the Marienkirche in East Berlin that this second Church struggle would not last as long as the first, but few shared his optimism. The logic of communism and the experience of every communist country to date promised only a struggle which would not end until the organized Church was subservient, and the true Church among the martyrs. The resistance of youth, the witness of pastors and church workers, arrested and free, was informed by the hope that God would bless this martyrdom rather than by the hope of a political change.

The resistance of the Evangelical Church, however, was for this reason all the greater. It was estimated that about one-third of all the youth who were faced with the question, refused in spite of all pressures to withdraw from the Junge Gemeinde, and were expelled from school. In some villages nearly the whole Christian youth group was expelled in a body. To be elected to the cabinet of a Studentengemeinde was to run a better than even chance of being expelled from the university. But there was no lack of candidates. One Studentengemeinde, disbanded by a misunderstanding and the timidity of its pastor, proved stronger after its dissolution

than before. Attendance at Junge Gemeinde meetings decreased, but improved in quality and depth. Enough congregations prayed regularly for the imprisoned brethren to call forth continual protests of annoyance from the State. One congregation at least was strengthened against many compromises it might have made, because it could not let its imprisoned pastor down. Church leaders were even more active. One bishop travelled through his province speaking in every important town, giving accurate facts and correcting the distortions of propaganda attacks. Official church pronouncements and pastoral letters stated the Christian stand on every major aspect of the struggle. They were only the public aspect of a continuous assualt on the offices of the Ministerpresident, the Ministry of Justice, The State Security Service and others on a regional or national level, on behalf of arrested pastors, persecuted youth groups, forbidden meetings and the like. In all of this the emphasis was not on the Church alone. Pastoral letters and official protests from the Church dealt also with the basic injustices which the people were suffering - the plight of the free farmer and merchant, arbitrary arrests and the pressure to make false statements and the like.

The main aim of this Church struggle was not resistance to the state as such, but simply Christian witness to truth and justice, and the expression of that love of one's neighbour which the Gospel commands. Nevertheless the resistance of Church people and their leaders to the communist attack, became a major political fact, with which the Russians had to reckon.

So it was that, on June 5th, the East Conference of the Evangelical Church in Germany requested a conference with Ministerpresident Grotewohl to bring up four main complaints: (1) the arrest and conviction of church workers, (2) the confiscation of church institutions by the state, (3) measures of the state against the Junge Gemeinde and Studentengemeinde, and (4) hindrances to church life. To everyone's surprise, this conference was granted on June 10th, and in the presence of other leading East German politicians, Grotewohl and the church leaders agreed on the following concessions:

1. There are to be no further measures taken against the so-called Junge Gemeinde or other church activities. The Office for Youth Questions under the Ministerpresident is commissioned, in consultation with representatives of the Church of the Junge Gemeinde, and of the Free German Youth, to handle all questions at issue.

2. All pupils who have been removed from school in connection with the recent examinations of pupils and the discussion about activity in the Junge Gemeinde are to be reinstated immediately. They are to be given opportunity to make up missed examinations. The ministry for People's Education is to investigate and decide immediately concerning the reinstatement of teachers who were dismissed for the same reason.

3. All dismissals of students because of their membership in the Evangelical or other Studentengemeinden are to be reinvestigated immediately by the Secretariat for Higher Education, and are to be decided by June 20, 1953.

4. The Ministry for People's Education is to work out immediately regulations which will allow the holding of religious instruction in school buildings. The limitations on the holding of religious instruction in school buildings, which have come about since January 1st, 1953, are to be reinvestigated and removed.

5. The confiscated institutions of ecclesiastical character are to be given back to their previous management. (Three institutions of the four were mentioned here. The fourth, the Castle Mansfeld, was withheld, and was the only immediate request of the Church which the government did not grant).

6. The Secretariat of the Interior will take responsibility for expediting the Church's re-occupation of its vacation places on the Baltic Sea.

7. The judgments of the courts are to be re-investigated, and unjust severity is to be stopped.

8. The regulations concerning the duty of announcing meetings are to be re-investigated and difficult cases are to be mediated.

9. State subsidies to the churches will be paid according to the agreed rules. These were the parallel to a more startling change in the total policy of the German Democratic Republic, which had been decided upon in a meeting of the Politburo of the Socialist Unity Party the day before. After confessing many errors in its course of sharp socialization of the preceding year, it announced sweeping changes in its whole economic and political policy. Taxes on private industry, commerce, and agriculture were eased. Merchants and farmers whose property had been confiscated, were offered it back again, with reparation for that which could not be restored. An amnesty was declared for all who had been sentenced up to 3 years in prison for "economic crimes". Under this amnesty thousands of small businessmen and farmers were set free. Full reinstatement of all rights and property was offered to refugees who would return. Interzonal travel was to be opened once more. Thousands of East Zoners are travelling in the West today. Ten thousand were given passes for the Hamburg Kirchentag. Many West Germans and Berliners can now travel in the East Zone, for the first time in a year. Finally, ration cards were restored to several classes of people who had lost them, prices were ordered down on certain goods, and railroad fares for certain groups were to be lowered.

These changes were to a large extent carried through. All over the Zone pupils who dared to go back to school were received, sometimes with open arms, and passed examinations which they had previously, for political reasons, failed. Teachers of religion are now able to take their classes in school rooms, with far less hindrance than before. Church subsidies were paid, and philanthropic institutions were returned to the Church. Of 38 church workers arrested in the previous year 35 were released within six weeks. Most of the remaining names on the list of the Church for intercessory prayer are church workers who had been arrested in the previous seven years not in connection with the direct attack of the past year on the Church. Church meetings and larger conferences as well are now held with little hindrance, and without the requirement that they register with the police. Several such are being planned with guests from West Germany. The economic and political pressure on the general population has also eased considerably. State food supplies were released to help overcome the famine.

In general, the population greeted this change with relief but with suspicion and hardly with joy. A common reaction was satisfaction that the swine had had to retreat this far, and regret that they were still strong enough to sit in their offices. The removal of a few of the injustices of the regime - the release of a few prisoners, and the return of a few farms and businesses - whetted the thirst of the people for a thorough change. Few refugees have returned. Only a few farmers have asked for their land back. Deep scepticism prevails. Is it worth while to

invest in one's farm again when the political line may shift again next year? Churchmen also were and are sceptical in their political judgments. They refer to this period commonly as "our breathing space".

Of Christians however, something else must also be said. They received this new change with thanksgiving to God, and are trying to use it as a God-given opportunity. This leads to two practical tasks: (1) to push forward everywhere, to use the newly opened opportunities to the uttermost, and so to take the government, not only at its word, but on the assumption that God is leading it in the direction of a just state. No chance must be missed to right an injustice or develop the life of the Church, and to carry the Gospel to the whole society; (2) to get to work on the business of constructive living in spite of justified scepticism about the future. Now is not the time to stand idle hoping for still greater changes. The East German economy is bankrupt. Communist planning has failed to produce the necessities of life. Now private farmers and businessmen are being offered a new chance. Everything will depend on whether they take hold and work, building themselves once more into the economic system, making themselves indispensable to the total health of the society, or whether they are hindered therefrom by resentment, fear, or false hopes.

There is, in short, a quality of faith which distinguishes active, thinking Christians from others. In the time of persecution this took the form of Christian staying with their farms longer and under greater risks, or even through the experience of confiscation and imprisonment. The same was true of many youth and students expelled from school, and of other social groups. They wanted to witness to the Gospel and to serve in the community where God has called them, even through suffering. When the release came it was then these Christians who could take it with thankfulness to God and not with a release of rage. It is these Christians now, who are called to continue the same line of service as before, holding up to the state standards of justice and humanity in a thousand practical ways, not as a strategy which expects to find a way out for Germany, but simply bec this is their reasonable service as Christians in the world.

There is also an understanding of the way the grace of God works through the functions which belong to a healthy society, which gives direction to Christian action here. There are right and wrong ways to run a farm. There are productive and unproductive ways to handle a factory, in view of the welfare of the whole community engaged in the work and its service to the community. The whole land is mortally ill with an overdose of ideological planning which forgot that healthy respect before the facts and conditions of economic, political, and human life, which Christians have been free and courageous enough to keep before their eyes. But God has the care of society in His hands. He ordains functions and sets conditions for its life. Realizing this, Christians can set to work pragmatically building up good farms and businesses, perhaps also collective farms and businesses confident that this sort of work bears witness to the power of God.

A declaration of the Church illustrates this point:

"Naturally one can ask sceptically: is not all this just the result of political tactics? Why not? In the whole history of the Church a persecution has never ended without the powers that be having their political reasons for ending it. Christianity lives under continuous pressure from political powers and the resolution of the political tensions is always being postponed. That is no ground for scepticism, but for profound gratitude, because we experience ever anew the fact that history does not go the way human beings plan it. There is a Lord of history, who can turn the hearts of men, even those of politicians, to His ends, like streams of water.

"Therefore we take with sober gratitude the great possibility that the Church, and especially the Junge Gemeinde, can witness once more in freedom to the name of Jesus Christ before the world. God save us from wasting this hour in comfortable security and self-satisfaction. God give us the spirit of forgiveness, also toward those who have insulted and persecuted us. God grant us an honest renewed chance to wrestle with the convictions of the followers of a materialist world view."

Against this background occurred the events of the 16th and 17th of June. Shrewd anaylsis and personal observation supports the thesis that a small, controlled demonstration of workers was planned - perhaps by the Russians, perhaps by the moderate wing of the Socialist Unity Party - to protest at the high work norms, which workers simply could not fulfil. However, this demonstration snowballed. Workers were joined by the whole population, without a thought for consequences. It was a genuine cry of the oppressed, a tremendous upheaval of the people which spread like wildfire from Berlin to cities and factories all over the East Zone. The demands of the crowd in Berlin were too high - down with the government, 40% lower prices, free, secret elections, and no arrests following the demonstrations. But it was a crowd in a revolutionary mood, whose cries arose and formed themselves spontaneously. It was also a crowd which knew some limits. It did not attack the Russians until they intervened to declare martial law. Its rage was vented on the East German government and on Walter Ulbricht in particular. In some parts of the Zone it was more violent. Prisons were attacked and thrown open, or, in one case, the government officials barricaded themselves in the prison from the mob outside in a neat bit of poetic justice. A few government officials were mobbed and killed. But in other areas it was, as in Berlin, a jubilant holiday, till the Russians intervened.

The Russians suppressed the demonstrations with great brutality, and this brutality has been perpetuated in the policies of the Ministry of Justice under its new minister, Hilde Benjamin. At first, however, the Russians were in total and exclusive charge, using the firing squad liberally, arresting people on the slightest suspicion, declaring martial law in factories and the like. Here and there, however, cases of inexplicable mildness turned up.

In this situation Church leaders did everything in their power to persuade the Russians, and more recently Hilde Benjamin's Ministry of Justice, to abandon violent suppressive measures. One bishop demanded and obtained an interview with the Russian commander in his city, and reminded him that he, the bishop, had, at the risk of being shot for treason, pleaded with the Nazi commander in 1945 to surrender the city to the Russians to prevent further bloodshed among innocent people. He had come this time, he said, again as a pleader for the people, whose heart the Church knew. The Russians could never hope to pacify the country with their present violent methods. They would only cause the death of more thousands, and deepen the resentment of all the people. The people must be won by some demonstration of kindness, humanity, and justice.

The Russian commander was profoundly impressed. He asked for a written report of the Bishop's remarks to send to his superiors. "Why didn't you come to us before", said he, "if you know what the people are thinking ?" Now the Bishop's statement is in Berlin Soviet Headquarters, and the Bishop's head is in the lion's mouth. However, he has the company of almost every responsible Church leader.

Since June 17th the government of the German Democratic Republic seems to have been pursuing a double course. On the one hand the milder economic and church policy has been maintained, even to large numbers of interzonal passes for visitors to and from the Zone. However Ulbricht seems once more to be powerful, and the Ministry of Justice is pursuing a severe course again. The propaganda tone which suddenly ceased on June 10th, with its wild accusations against spies, saboteurs, and imperialist war-mongers, is beginning to be heard again, above all in the speeches of Ulbricht himself. Political speculation suggests among others the following ideas:

1. The Russians may be simply playing to influence the West German election in hopes of strengthening their bargaining position in relation to Germany.

2. The Russians were genuinely baffled by the June 17th demonstrations. They had more or less believed the reports of the Socialist Unity Party about the progres of re-education and the mind of the people. As a result they feel fundamentally insecure, probably in Poland and Czechoslovakia as well as East Germany. This may well paralyze any constructive action they might otherwise take by way of compromise with the West on Germany. They may be afraid of a chain reaction in the other satellite states if they release East Germany. In all of this the fundamental question is, whether there is enough unquestioned leadership and political imaginati in Moscow to be capable of making a really new political proposal in relation to Germany.

3. The East German government is thoroughly discredited with the people since June 17th. This is a political fact with which the Russians must reckon. This government is trying to re-establish its control by harsh police measures, and harsh falsifications of the events of June 17th in its propaganda. But this will not fundamentally strengthen the Russian hand in East Germany. There were for a whi strong signs which pointed to a reorganized government formed of the two "bourgeois" parties - the Christian Democratic Union and the Liberal Democratic Party - and the moderate Communists. But this is at the moment in abeyance. How long will Ulbricht now seen as a failure, be able to hold on?

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II. A VISIT TO CHINA

(The following is a report by Bishop Theodor Arvidson of Stockholm, Methodist Church, Northern Europe Central Conference, describing his visit to China earlier this year)

The invitation to go to China in company with eight other Swedes invited as an unpolitical cultural delegation was indeed a great surprise to myself, receiving it as I did a couple of days after my return from the Central Conference in Helsingfors where my request to retire from active service was duly granted. I had never joined in the peace conferences or supported the resolutions that were published under the headline of the Stockholm Peace Conference and its consecutive conferences of the same kind. I always refused, because I regarded the statements one-sided, trying to lay the blame for the cold war and the present wars in the East on the Western powers exclusively. But in spite of this those concerned with the preparations for this study commission seem to regard me as an earnest friend of peace, which seems to be a kind of explanation that I was included. Other members of the delegation were also decidedly and openly against the communistic ideology. I turned to the Foreign Secretary of the Swedish Government, Mr. Osten Unden, for advice and he was very encouraging, saying that he regarded the fact that a churchman was invited as a new token of a changed mind and attitude from the concerned parties, and expressed his opinion by saying that if the Iron Curtain is withdrawn from some countries, we should not use the first opportunity to lower a new one, thus keeping us away from the possibilities of creating friendly relations between other people.

Leaving Stockholm by airplane on April 21st, we arrived at Moscow the same evening and found that we had to stay two days in Moscow before the previously arranged booking opened our way for going further to Siberia and China. Our Foreign Office had prepared my way both in Moscow and in Peking by cables to our ambassadors and when I called Mr. Sohlman, the Swedish ambassador in Moscow, over the 'phone and got his kind invitation for lunch the day after, I asked if he could help me to get a connection with Protestant Christians. He promised to request such an opportunity by asking the Soviet Government to help. While I was sitting together with the ambassador the day after, having finished the luncheon, a telephone call came from the Soviet Government telling that the Baptist Church had a public meeting Wednesday evening at 7 o'clock and I could meet the leaders of the Baptist denomination an hour before. A Swedish lady staying with the ambassador for language study was assigned to accompany me and in the automobile of the Swedish Embassy we went to the Baptist church and I had the privilege of meeting five of the leaders of the Baptist denomination in a very cordial conference at 6 o'clock. The chairman of the denomination, Jacob Schidkoff, and the General Secretary, Alexander Kareff, were among those present. They invited me to speak in the church which was crowded with people, having waited for two hours for the beginning of the service and numbering probably nearly 2,000 persons. The General Secretary spoke good German and I also used the German language to give a Gospel message and bring greetings from the Christians in Scandinavia. The meeting was indeed most impressive with the most lively interest in everything I had to say and the immediate and warm reactions when I brought the words of greeting. They also afterwards asked me to convey their warm Christian greetings to any group of Christians I should come in contact with outside Russia and most especially they wanted me to greet the Baptists in China and Scandinavia. The General Secretary wrote down his address and said that they would like to receive letters from other Christians and would gladly write again.

After an interesting journey through Siberia, landing at Kasan, Sverdlosch, Omsk, Novosibirish, Krasewjorsh and Irkusk, we passed the border into Mongoliet stopping for short intervals at Uland-Bator - Sajn - Sjande. We arrived in Peking in the evening of April 26th. Among the representatives for the People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, who greeted us was also a Congregational minister, P.H. Wang, who, later introduced himself as the chairman of the board of the Yen-Ching Union School of Religion in Peking, which is the theological training school for the Methodist Church, The Congregational Church, the Episcopal Church and some branches of Christian churches which had united before the unification of these schools, which was brought about in April, 1953. The three schools referred to were called earlier (Newton Chiang I-chen) Peking Theological Seminary (with Samuel Lee as principal) and Peking Union Bible School for Women. I had the privilege of meeting the leading brethren first at the service in Asbury Memorial Methodist Church and also in the new and very spacious and pleasant property they are using for their school work. I ought perhaps to mention some of the brethren I met at the last occasion: Dr. T.F. Li, Professor of the Old Testament and member of the Methodist Church (he by the way directed a very deep and beautiful Communion Service in the beginning of the service in Asbury Church); Rev. Samuel Lee, mentior above; the earlier mentioned Rev. P.H. Wang, who is not only chairman of the Board, but also teacher in the School of Religion; as well as Mr. Chas. Fu-San, a brilliant lay member of the Episcopal Church who served as interpreter in two important connections when we met the Minister for the Interior and the Secretary General of the Education Department of the New China, etc.

In all the cities we visited there were Christian leaders in the reception committee. In Mukden the Rev. Sun Peng-Hsi, pastor in the Presbyterian Church (where I was privileged to worship Sunday morning May 10th and also delivered a short speech). In Nanking the principal of the Nanking Union Theological Seminary, Dr. K.H. Ting met together with Luther Shao, secretary of the Disciples of Christ Church. In Shanghai I met Bishop Kaung and I had two appreciated opportunities to preach, Sunday, May 17th, at the morning service in Moore Methodist Church, with an excellent interpreter by name of Huang Pei-Yung, earlier Y.M.C.A. secretary but ordained deacon in the Methodist Church at the Annual Conference of East China which began Thursday, May 21st, under the leadership of Bishop Kaung. The bishop opened with a very impressive conference sermon and then gave me a new opportunity to speak at a conference of 160 ministers and lay delegates. It ought to be said perhaps that at these services and banquest arranged by the Christians for me no outsider was present and the interpretations were made by Christian ministers.

In case the names may be known I should tell you that in Shanghai the church reception committee consisted of the Rev. George Wu, General Secretary of the Methodist Church in China, and the Rev. C.W. Li, pastor of the Community Church at 53 Hengshaw Road, Shanghai; in Canton, Hseung Chen Pei, belonging to the earlier British Methodist Mission in Wuhan, Bishop Chang Hai-Sung of the Episcopal Church and Hsiao Kuo Kuei, president of the Chinese Methodist Churches in the Hupeh district

The observations and experiences during six weeks' travel and visitations in China is too big a subject to be reported on in detail in this letter. But I think it is worthwhile to mention one thing more. When I visited the Swedish Ambassador, Mr. Wistrand, in connection with the luncheon the Embassy gave to our delegation of nine at Peking, he asked me to meet him privately afterwards and then told me that he had the names of 110 former missionaries in China who had disappeared. He had been asked by the ambassadors of different countries to find out about their fate, as it was supposed that they were imprisoned in China. He asked me whether

I could do anything to help him to clarify that question as he had great difficulties in doing anything on behalf of countries that had no diplomatic connection with China. I took those names of missionaries from the U.S.A., Canada, Belgium, France and Italy, etc., and promised to use any suitable opportunity to help clarify the matter. We had a luncheon at one o'clock and at three o'clock the same day we were invited to meet the Minister for the Interior of the Central People's Government, Mr. Hsi Chu-Tsai, who was an elderly gentleman of perhaps 85 years of age. He spoke at length about the People's Republic of China and its development and after his address invited our group to ask questions, if so desired. No one was quite prepared, so my Swedish friends began to write down their questions. In the meantime, I asked permission to raise two questions with the Minister without writing them down, and I asked him what he meant by stating that certain members of the Chinese society could not partake in the general elections planned for next fall, and secondly, if he could tell me something about the fate of certain Christian missionaries who had not returned to their home lands and who were supposed to be in prison in China. The minister answered by specifying what people he had in mind when he said that not all were permitted to vote. He referred to the landlords before their property was confiscated; to the contra-revolutionaries who had supported the Kuomintang after the liberation and criminals of different kinds, stating, however, that it was less than 1% of the people that thus had no right to vote. He also explained that under certain circumstances these people, except the criminals, should by and by regain their full citizenship and be permitted to partake in the elections. I asked for the floor once more and thanked him for the answer to this first question, but pointed out that I had asked about the missionaries and wondered if the honoured Minister did not like to answer my question about their treatment and present status, suggesting, however, that a fair and generous treatment of these people, an amnesty for political mistakes, would be one of the best proofs of the new China's willingness and desire to take its place among other friendly nations of the world. The minister then answered in the following way: "I do not know if there are any missionaries in prison in China. Generally, we send them back to their own countries, that is the easiest way of handling those cases. We wish to send them back as soon as possible. But China is a big country. I do not know every detail. If you know of any missionaries in prison here and can give me their names, I should like to investigate and find out." I then drew up the lists of 110 foreign missionaries and handed them over to the Minister for the Interior, saying that I hoped it would be investigated rapidly enough for me to learn some result of the investigation. The Minister declared that this matter belonged to the Foreign Department of the Government, but he promised to take the names and hand them over to this Department. I reported this to the Swedish Ambassador in Peking and he told me later on that he had received expressions of appreciation and satisfaction from the Foreign Secretary of Sweden and from several of the ambassadors of other countries. Up-to-date, however, I have had no report from those concerned in Peking though I reminded them of the matter immediately before I left for Sweden.

In this connection I want to quote the statement of the Minister for the Interior given during the same discussion. He said, "We think that the church in China is able to support its own work. We do not believe that the mission work from foreign countries is needed any more. I have also observed that the Chinese themselves are able to manage their own church interests. I have also seen that they celebrate, for instance, the Christmas festival and Easter in the same way as they did when the foreign missionaries were among them." And to make this question still more clear, I like to mention that on April 30th we had a

conference with Mr. Chien Cheh-jui, Secretary General of the Committee of Culture and Education. His address was somewhat characterized by animosity against the old educational ideals, etc. and he referred frequently to Mao Tse-tung and Lenin and Marx. He did not even mention the Christian mission and its value for the new China which fact inspired me to raise the question with him as to what value the Christian mission with more than 100 years' work of numerous physicians, nurses and teachers had had for the people and for the formation of the ideals of the new China. Mr. Chien answered something like this: (I think it is correct in content if not in form). "Education should be handled by the people itself in order to be of the greatest possible use. Because of this the government has determined from 1950 to take over the schools that were supported by American contributions. Also schools supported from other countries are to be taken over gradually by the State. In Peking the Yenching University and the Catholic University have been taken over by the government from 1949 on. For the same reasons the children's homes, the hospitals and similar institutions have been taken over by the people of China, first from the U.S.A. and then from the missions of other countries. There are some physicians, teachers and other appointe who are permitted to stay, if they so desire, and wish to co-operate with the government. When you ask how we evaluate these missionaries, physicians, etc., we should like to answer the following: The old China was semi-colonial and feudal. And during that period the imperialistic countries have used the missions for these countries' political interest and erected hospitals and other institutions. Such cultural and political aggression should cease. Closer study of these institutions has shown us that they were utilized to hurt the people's real interes but promoted imperialistic interests. From 1951, the taking over of these institutions has been looked upon with satisfaction by the people and the development of these institutions later on has proved that our conception has been completely correct."

The Secretary General, however, closed with the following words: "We do know, however, that many of the physicians, missionaries and teachers of the old China who were sent by the imperialistic countries came here with honest intentions and willingness to serve the people of China. Such instances were not unusual. We wish to express our appreciation of these men and women for their work among the people of China. We have also declared that those men and women who do not work against the interests of the peoples of the Republic of China could stay and continue their work."

In commenting upon the answer given by the Secretary General, I thanked him for the open acknowledgment that had been given to the mission work within schools, hospitals, etc., "but I am certain that I have a right to assure the Secretary General for Culture and Education that the accusation of imperialistic intentions which the State wanted to promote through the missionaries in many cases are quite without meaning. Take, for instance, the Swedish missionaries. I can assure you," I said, "that they have gone to the mission work with open hearts and good will to be of greatest help for the people of China with no imperialistic ulterior motives." (This statement was applauded).

I can of course guarantee nothing with regard to the sincerity of the brethren and sisters who spoke with me, but from all the Christians came unanimous testimony of confidence and faith in the future. They seem to believe that they could continue with their testimony unhampered by the new regime. And they seem to have some degree of liberty for their work, they continued their Sunday schools and organisations of womem and youth and regular services and the development of the work could be observed also through the fact that several new church buildings were under erection and recently dedicated. For instance, in Shanghai two new churches, one Baptist and one so-called Apostolic Pentecostal, were erected. The last one had a former Methodist minister as pastor, the Rev. K.S. Tsoh and had built its new church for 380 million Yuan. The Church of Christ in China had dedicated a new church just outside Shanghai at Changsu and when I asked the price for that building the pastor, Z.T. Wei, told me that it had cost only 14 million Yuan and explained that this building with 600 seats, built of concrete, bricks and wood, they had been able to erect so cheaply because the government had given a special cut price because the community was poor and further the members of the church had done all the work without pay. They had been working at Changsu for 15 years without any great success, but now the work had developed and they were full of hope and confidence for the future, Brother Wei declared.

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III. NANKING'S NEW UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY[1]

by

Ting Kuang-Hsun[2]

For those in the West who have been victims of propaganda about "religious persecution" in new China, it may be difficult to believe that there can be any theological education in this country. However, the fact is that theological institutions - both Roman Catholic and Protestant - are open and operating in China, under Chinese Christian auspices and supported by Chinese Christians ourselves.

Here in Nanking we are just completing the first term in the new Nanking Union Theological Seminary. This seminary is a union of 11 smaller East China Protestant theological colleges, including the Fukien Union Theological College in Foochow, the Central Anglican (Episcopal) Theological School in Shanghai, the China Baptist Theological Seminary in Shanghai, the North China Theological School of Tung Hsien in Shantung province, and the Chi Loo University School of Theology in Tsinan.

The 101 students in this amalgamated institution in Nanking are at three academic levels: post-graduate, university and senior high school. There will be 31 graduates at the end of the first term. All of them have accepted invitations to take up assistant pastorates or to do other church work in the cities and rural areas. This is a clear indication that the church is continuing normally in China today.

Some may ask: "But are there new students entering theological institutes?" U to the present we have already 97 applications for admission. Unfortunately, our present facilities are limited and we are not able to take them all in immediately.

At the heart of our curriculum are courses in the Old and New Testaments. Equa importance is given to Systematic Theology. At the same time, we also offer courses in Church History, History of Dogma, Biblical Archaeology, Pastoral Theology Church Music, Languages and so forth. The language courses are in Chinese, Greek, Hebrew and English.

Christians all over the world are aware of how disunity among Christians and between church groups accounts for a large part of our failure in the work of evangelism. For a long time it seemed as if not even the best intentions to bring about unity could succeed. Formerly, a joint committee, representing two theological schools from the same city in China, worked for 15 years on a plan for their union without any tangible result.

Today, in New China, the entire atmosphere has changed. Self-containment or self-aggrandisement has become outmoded. Thus, the 11 seminaries in East China have been able to achieve their union on an entirely voluntary basis and within a relatively short period, to the gratification of all Christians who had prayed that this should happen.

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[1] This article was published in: China Monthly Review. July 1953, p.11

[2] K.H. Ting (Ting Kuang-Hsun) an Anglican minister, is now dean of the new Union Theological Seminary in Nanking and formerly (1947 to 1951) secretary of the World Student Christian Federation.

Fifteen Protestant denominations take part in the newly organised seminary. he special characteristics and needs of each denomination are given due respect not nly in the setting up of the curriculum but also in the planning of the worship nd the general life of the seminary community. For instance, while most services re for all to attend, a chapel is set apart for Anglicans (or Episcopalians) to old their own celebration of Holy Communion on Sundays and Holy Days.

Since our seminary is different from other institutions of higher education n China in that ours is in every way a church institution and not a government one, ur financial support comes solely from Christian sources. However, the seminary has een organised with the knowledge and good will of the people's government in ccordance with the principle of freedom of religion as guaranteed by Article 5 of he Common Programme of the country.

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The deliberately-spread rumour that the Christian Church in China is not free nd is being persecuted is absolutely groundless. In the spring of 1948, many church s well as secular publications in the West reported on the sensational "Crucifixion"" f the Reverend Ernest A.T. Tsang, a Baptist professor of New Testament then teaching n Shantung, at the hands of the Chinese communists in that province.

Despite all the sympathy and worry aroused by this report stating that the "martyr" ad suffered for three days and three nights on a wooden cross before he died, the act is that the Reverend Tsang is still alive today and is teaching three courses in he New Testament right here at our Nanking seminary.

The Church is free in China. We have not been asked to change one iota of the istoric Christian faith which is as precious to us Christians in China as it is to hristians the world over. Sunday services in our churches are well attended and he spiritual level of our members is high. It is only within a church that is liv- ng and free that such a seminary as ours can become a possibility and a necessity.

Many young Christian men and women are considering the ministry and church work s a way for them to serve God and the people. Today, Christian ministers are working ithin an environment of moral health and vigour. They can carry on their moral nd spiritual tasks with consciences at peace because, today, they have the freedom o come all-out for peace, democracy, liberty, human dignity and all those things hich the Christian faith demands of a human community.

In the past, ministers with a real sense of calling were bound to feel conscience- tricken since they were forced to refrain from expressing an opinion on all "touchy issues". It was a risk even to show any sympathy for the peace movement, lthough they knew it was peace the world needed.

But, today, we have no inhibitions about speaking our minds as Christians. In ew China, religious freedom is much more than government toleration of religion. t also includes the freedom of the Christian conscience. And this makes it a eal joy to be a minister of the gospel.

The church in China has a unique role to play at this new beginning of our country. It will carry out this role not only through its worship and its work of love but also by dedicating itself to the cause of world peace. The Church in China today feels impelled from within to call its sister churches abroad to consider seriously their attitude as regards the cause of world peace. Peace cannot be separated from the core of that Faith which the church professes.

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Churches in Shanghai

The number of churches in Shanghai, China's largest city, has increased since liberation in May 1949. A large Baptist church building was completed last year and opened to churchgoers on one of the city's main streets. By the end of 1952 there were about 10 different Protestant denominations in Shanghai, represented by 139 churches, not including their various branch churches. Since liberation attendance has been going up; for example, in the one-time American-run Community Church, attendance which once fell as low as 70, now averages well over 200 every Sunday.

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